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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 CAIRO 002438

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: ARAB LEAGUE SUPPORTS ABBAS; DOES NOT CONDEMN HAMAS

Classified By: MINISTER COUNSELOR WILLIAM R. STEWART  
REASONS: 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Arab League Ministerial meeting of November 26 resulted in explicit support for PA President Abbas to remain in office until the intra-Palestinian conflict is resolved and parliamentary and presidential elections are able to be held. There was no explicit reference to Hamas bearing responsibility for the ongoing Palestinian political impasse. The meeting was characterized as "tense" and "difficult" by Egyptian MFA and Arab League contacts, but with a clear focus on support for Abbas and Palestinian reconciliation. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Arab League Secretariat Chief of Staff Hisham Yousef briefed local diplomats November 30 on the November 26 Arab League ministerial meeting. Yousef said the meeting focused on Palestinian reconciliation, Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and humanitarian conditions in Gaza, which he characterized as being "under siege."

¶3. (SBU) Egyptian FM Aboul Gheit briefed the ministerial on GOE intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts. According to Yousef, Aboul Gheit expressed "deep concern" that the December 10 reconciliation meeting had been postponed, but stressed Egypt's intention to reschedule the meeting in the near future. Yousef told the group of diplomats that the Arab League's goal was not to assign blame to any Palestinian faction, but rather to return to the negotiating table "without delay."

¶4. (SBU) Support for Abbas: Yousef said the Arab League was firm that if Palestinian reconciliation is not achieved before January 9 (i.e. the end of Abbas' term in office), Abbas will remain as president until the Palestinian factions come to agreement. President Abbas must "shoulder his responsibilities to achieve reconciliation and conduct parliamentary and presidential elections in the entire occupied territories," he said. "The issue is not whether or not to support President Abbas as an individual but rather Palestinian interests. We are not prepared to see a power vacuum. We hope for elections, as does Abbas. The question is how, and we hope that this will not be a contentious issue," he said.

¶5. (C) Yosuef reported on Moussa's recent meeting with Hamas leader Khaled Mishal in Damascus. Mishal was extremely critical of the Arab League and the Egyptian-sponsored reconciliation process. He said that Hamas would return to the negotiating table in a "short period of time," according to Yousef, but the issue of Hamas "political prisoners" detained by the PA must be resolved. In addition, Mishal told Moussa that Hamas wants PA President Abbas to be present at the negotiations. Yousef commented that "we think Abbas is the president of all Palestinians. They (Hamas) want an empowered negotiator at the table. Fine. But it doesn't have to be Abbas himself."

¶6. (SBU) PA representative Saeb Erekat reported to the ministers that there had been "a lot of talk" but not much

progress on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The Arab League ministerial also discussed how to engage the incoming U.S. administration. To that end, Yousef said that AL SYG Moussa and Saudi Arabian FM Saud al Faisal will send a letter urging President-elect Obama to engage without delay on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that such engagement would have a positive effect on regional dynamics, including Iraq.

17. (SBU) Humanitarian situation in Gaza: Yousef said the Arab League decided that humanitarian assistance must be delivered immediately to Gaza, and that Egypt (via the MFA) and Jordan will coordinate this effort. The Egyptians will facilitate movement of goods via Karem Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing; the Jordanians will work with the Israelis to move supplies into Gaza via Israel. Yousef was testy when asked by the German DCM if Hamas would stop rocket attacks in order to ensure resumption of humanitarian supplies and fuel. He argued that "stopping supplies of humanitarian assistance should not be the response of the 'occupying power,'" and that we should neither assume nor expect Hamas to have full control of Gaza and the ability to enforce a total cessation of rocket attacks.

18. (C) Separately, Jordanian and Egyptian contacts reported that the meeting, although strained at times, was focused on supporting Abbas and the intra-Palestinian negotiations. According to MFA Cabinet Advisor for Arab Affairs Mahmoud Afifi, the Qataris and Sudanese were less vocal than normal on support for Hamas; the main skirmish occurred between Syrian FM Moallam and PA representative Erekat over the possibility of including Hamas at a future meeting.

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UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF TEXT OF ARAB LEAGUE RESOLUTIONS:

19. (U) Resolution on Palestinian Developments  
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The Arab League Council on the ministerial level in its emergency session on 26/11/2008 in Cairo

-After reading the memorandum of the general secretariat.

-Stresses the extreme attention it gives to Palestinian National Unity and Unity of the Palestinian Territories and on the necessity to protect the Palestinian National Project to establish a Palestinian state the capital of which is Eastern Jerusalem.

-Reminds all the Palestinian factions and organizations of the large challenges that the Palestinian case faces in light of a complex international environment. This requires the solidarity and unity of all Palestinians to face these challenges to the interest of the Palestinian people who want to end the occupation and to achieve their legitimate rights.

-Stresses the danger of the situation resulting from the continuous Palestinian disagreements and the negative effects on the Palestinian case.

-Expresses extreme worry regarding the continuous state of current Palestinian disagreement and not holding the Palestinian Dialogue Conference that was scheduled for the 10th of November 2008 in Cairo upon invitation from the Arab Republic of Egypt.

-Asks all the Palestinian sides to respond to the efforts spent to achieve the Palestinian reconciliation in order to evade the dangerous consequences of that on the Palestinian case and people.

-Follows with increasing worry the dangerous situation for Palestinians in all the occupied Palestinian territories and especially in Gaza and ask for an immediate application of the international humanitarian law and 4th Geneva agreement

regarding aiding civilians at the time of occupation.

-Refers to the continuous Arab and international interest and support for negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides to regain the legitimate Palestinian rights and to establish the Palestinian state the capital of which is Eastern Jerusalem according to the international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

-Stresses its earlier resolutions on the same topic.

-And following listening to the interventions of the presidents of the delegations

DECIDES:

- To welcome the announcement of the Arab Republic of Egypt to continue its efforts to achieve comprehensive Palestinian reconciliation and calls all the Palestinian factions to work seriously to regain Palestinian unity and to begin the efforts for Palestinian national reconciliation and serious and honest participation in the Palestinian National Dialogue as soon as possible.

- Respect the Palestinian national legitimacy lead by President Mahmoud Abbas, and respect the legitimate authorities of the Palestinian National Authority that is from the Palestinian Liberation Organization, including the elected Palestinian Legitimate Council, and be committed to the unity of the Palestinian decision in order to keep the rights and privileges of the Palestinian people that are vulnerable to danger.

- Stresses that the Palestinian National Reconciliation forms the only true guarantee to preserve the geographical and political unity for the Palestinian territories, and any side that seeks to or is benefiting from the division under any name or for any consideration will lose this opportunity. It stresses the necessity to direct the Palestinian energy to end the occupation and to complete the Palestinian national project.

- Asks all the Palestinian factions to immediately stop the media escalation and to stop the exchange of negative media campaigns.

- Supports the principles of dialogue that were agreed on between Palestinian factions with Egyptian sponsorship to end the case of division, and these principles are:

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- Form a national consensus government with a limited mission and term and that will allow for lifting the siege.

- Hold new presidential and legitimacy elections according to the Palestinian elections law.

- Restructure the Palestinian security bodies based on professionalism and nationalism.

- Activate the Palestinian Liberation Organization according to the Cairo Agreement for year 2005 and the Palestinian National Consensus document for year 2006.

- Call President Mahmoud Abbas to continue to bear his responsibilities as president of the Palestinian National Authority in order to complete the reconciliation process as soon as possible so as to activate all the forms of Palestinian National Action and to unite the Palestinian line in the face of all challenges and to conduct Presidential and legitimacy elections in all the Palestinian occupied territories.

- Support the Palestinian leadership in all its intensive efforts to reach a fair negotiated settlement, according

to the basics mentioned in the international legitimacy resolutions, and that end the Israeli occupation and put a limit to the suffering and tragedy of the Palestinian people and regain the national legitimate rights to empower the Palestinians to establish their independent state the capital of which is Eastern Jerusalem.

- Stress the commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative as a basis to end the Arab Israeli conflict and thank the international sides that supported the initiative and call on these sides to continue their efforts.

- Hold Israel -- the occupation authority -- responsible for the deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian authorities and ask Israel to immediately stop its hostile practices including attacks in the Christian and Muslim places which are done in a direct challenge to the 4th Geneva Agreement and international laws and international humanitarian law.

- Condemn the Israeli siege imposed on the Palestinian people and especially in Gaza Strip which lead to a huge deterioration in the humanitarian situation and stress the necessity to quickly lift the siege immediately and to promise to work to lift the siege and help the Palestinian people by all available means.

- Call the international community to bear its responsibilities regarding this collective punishment that Gaza is subject to, including forcing Israel to lift the siege, and support international relief institutions, lead by the UNRWA, to perform its responsibilities regarding the Palestinian citizens especially in the Gaza Strip in light of the Israeli violations of international humanitarian law.

- Condemn the dangerous violations practiced by Israel in Jerusalem and the digging in the area of Bab El Maghareba door and below the Jerusalem Mosque and its area and which threat to destroy the mosque and ask Israel (the occupation authority) to immediately stop all these procedures and apply its commitments according to international law and Geneva Agreements to preserve the Islamic and Christian Holy places in Jerusalem and ask the UNESCO to bear its responsibilities in this regard, especially noting that Israel resumed the digging and demolishing in the way leading to Bab El Maghareba and approved the new plan to construct the bridge on the way leading to Bab El Maghareba, and deepening the digging and directing it towards Bab El Selselah, one of the doors of the Blessed Jerusalem Mosque.

- Ask the international community to spend its efforts to stop the Israeli settlements activity in the occupied Palestinian territories and implement the international resolutions related especially the two United Nations Security Council resolutions number 465 for the year 1980 and number 497 for the year 1981 and which stress on the illegitimacy of settlement and the necessity to dismantle the current settlements. These settlements are a violation of international law and international legitimacy and related United Nations resolutions and take procedures to prevent any products from the Israeli settlements from benefitting from any facilitations or customs exemptions in international markets.

- Condemn Israeli continuation in constructing racist double-lane roads which lead to the confiscation of additional Palestinian territories and cuts the links for the West Bank which renders it impossible to establish an

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independent Palestinian state that is geographically communicative and able to sustain and ask the international community and especially the International Quartet Committee which always stresses on the importance of establishing a sustainable Palestinian state, pressure Israel to stop these violations and racist practices, to preserve the unity of the

Palestinian lands.

- Keep this meeting open to follow up on the developments in the Palestinian area.

- Ask the Secretary General to follow up on the implementation of this resolution and present and report on this regards to the council in its next session.

10. (U) Resolution on "The Cruel Israeli Siege on the Arab Occupied Territories and Especially the Gaza Strip and Taking Appropriate Procedures to Lift this Siege and Help the Palestinian People:"

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The Arab League Council on the ministerial level in its emergency session on 26/11/2008 in Cairo

- After reading the memorandum of the general secretariat

- And following listening to the interventions of the presidents of the delegations

- Condemns the cruel Israeli attack and practices of collective punishment by the Israeli Occupation Authorities on the Palestinian People in the occupied territories and especially in the Gaza Strip.

DECIDES:

- The Arab countries will send food products and medical equipment to the Gaza Strip immediately as well as receive medical patients from the Palestinian people.

- Assigns the Arab League General Secretariat to coordinate with the Egyptian and Jordanian concerned authorities to ensure the entry of food products, medicine and medical equipment to the Strip.

SCOBAY